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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR OES, EAP
USTR FOR DBROOKS
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TREASURY FOR KBERG
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SUBJECT: Asia Forest Partnership - Dynamic, Diverse, Widely Supported

¶1. Summary: The 8th Meeting of the Asia Forest Partnership (AFP) and AFP Dialogue underscored the value of its open membership and the informality of its discussions on sometimes-sensitive topics related to deforestation and forest degradation. AFP members and other participants at the May 27-29 meeting in Bali engaged in vigorous debate and the frank sharing of views on REDD and combating illegal logging. Indonesia's Ministry of Forestry (MOF) was a co-sponsor and active participant. Members hoped for broader USG participation in the future, noting that USG agencies have played a vital and pioneering role in anti-illegal logging efforts throughout the region. End Summary.

Background

¶2. The AFP is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder, partnership that promotes sustainable forest management in the Asia-Pacific region. It was launched in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and aims to promote cooperation among governments, civil society groups and the private sector in order to cope with high rates of deforestation and forest degradation in Asia. In addition to numerous conservation NGOs, research institutions, businesses and national governments (including the United States), AFP partners include the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Food and Agriculture Organization, and the United Nations Forum on Forests. Sponsors of the May 27-29 meeting included the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade-The Nature Conservancy (RAFT-TNC) Program supported by USAID, the German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the European Commission-Indonesia FLEGT Support Project as well as the World Resources Institute, the Institute for Global Environmental Studies, the UK Department of International Development, the World Bank, and the Swiss Government.

¶3. The AFP Dialogue was an opportunity for discussion about illegal logging and how it might affect mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (or REDD). The event, co-hosted by the MOF and CIFOR, included over 275 participants -- representatives of governments and NGOs as well as businesses from the Asia Pacific region and beyond. The dialogue examined whether financial transfers delivered through REDD could have a direct influence on the problem of illegal logging and forest governance.

Frank Discussions and Valuable Coordination

¶4. Numerous participants value the AFP as a forum to coordinate current and future programs, enhance collaboration, and discuss

contentious topics in an informal and non-intimidating environment. For example, Peter Younger, Manager of the Interpol Secretariat, stated that illegal logging is not a priority for Interpol member countries, given other competing issues. A MOF Deputy Director for Investigation and Forest Protection admitted that Indonesia's prosecution rate of illegal loggers is extremely low, that those convicted are mostly low-level operatives instead of financiers or masterminds and receive relatively short prison sentences. More than one Indonesian NGO representative questioned whether corruption would undermine the credibility of REDD projects in Indonesia. The Minister of Forestry M.S. Kaban as well as the MOF Secretary General conceded that REDD alone is no panacea for illegal logging. Improved forest governance, they said, is vital for the success of both REDD and anti-illegal logging efforts.

Widespread Support, Indonesian Engagement

15. There was broad and high-level MOF participation, including the Minister, Secretary General, Director for International Cooperation, a Special Advisor to the Minister (and former Director General for Forest Production Development), and Secretary of the Forestry Research and Development Agency. CIFOR Director General Frances Seymour told Emboff the MOF has been unusually engaged and forthcoming in AFP forums. She confided having been a skeptic about the AFP at first, but now sees its value in facilitating constructive dialogue among stakeholders that are sometimes at odds with one another. Seymour said that CIFOR has been pleased to host (and effectively subsidize) the operations of the AFP Secretariat. However, she hinted at a reluctance to do so indefinitely without support from other partners. Another senior CIFOR official said she hoped the United States, United Kingdom, and other countries would

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provide a small stream of annual funding sufficient to support a modest AFP Secretariat.

16. Other AFP partners voiced strong support for the AFP's mission and activities. Representatives of TNC, DFID, the Swiss government and Japan's Forestry Agency, among others, affirmed their long-term support for the partnership. In addition, representatives of private company Certisource announced that it would apply for AFP membership.

Broader U.S. Participation Urged

17. CIFOR scientists and other participants hoped that more officials from USG agencies (USAID, USTR, Forest Service, as well as State) would attend and participate in future AFP meetings. They noted the important pioneering role the USG has played in developing regional and bilateral partnerships to address illegal logging. These have included efforts through the East Asia Forest Law and Governance (FLEG) initiative and the International Tropical Timber Organization as well as bilateral MOUs with Indonesia and China.

18. For more information on the AFP, go to <http://www.asiaforests.org>.

NORTH